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INFORMATION REPORT

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(Verband antifaschistischer Freiheitskämpfer)

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Generalities

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1. The League of Anti-Fascist Freedom Fighters is a Communist-controlled organization which in all its activity attempts to masquerade as non-partisan and representative of all political parties. The League has its central office at the same address as the League of Concentration Camp Victims (KZ-Verband), Vienna I, Lichtenfelsgasse 7. Unlike the latter organization, however, which is Communist-infiltrated but includes many non-Communists, the League of Anti-Fascist Freedom Fighters is a so-called Communist cadre organization which admits non-Communists only as members but not as officials. There are about 6,000 members, divided up into smaller district organizations in the various Vienna districts (usually, several Vienna districts unite to form one such section; for example, Vienna VI, VII, and VIII have one section together). The typical structure of such a section may be seen in the following district representation from Vienna VI: 20 members, 4 of whom are officials of the KPÖ, 10 of whom are members of the KPÖ, and 6 of whom are non-Communist but strongly sympathetic to the Communist cause.
2. Membership in the organization, which carries with it granting of the title "Freedom Fighter", is given to persons who "have fought against a Fascist dictatorship", which is liberally interpreted to mean not only those who have taken part in the combat against Nazism, but also against the Dollfuss regime in Austria, against Franco in Spain, or against Chiang Kai-shek in China. Of late, the practice has been for a prospective member to be admitted on the basis of a confidential recommendation from the KPÖ; the title of "Freedom Fighter" has been given on the basis of opposition to "capitalism, Western imperialism, and the Marshall Plan", while "Fascism" has been broadly defined by the organization as "anything in contradiction to the class struggle". The regulations of the organization have been made to conform to this new relaxation of membership requirements.

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DDA Memo, 4 Apr 77
Auth: DDA REG. 77/1763

Date: 15 MAY 1978 By: 016

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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3. The steering committee of the organization includes Franz HONNER, member of the Central Committee, president; Dr. Heinrich DUERMAYER, former head of the State Police, vice-president; Walter FISCHER, brother of Ernst FISCHER; Major Franz GEBHART; Max SCHNEIDER, general secretary. In practice, although directives are laid down by the entire steering committee, practical execution of a given policy is almost always carried out by SCHNEIDER, who has wide discretionary powers and only rarely consults DUERMAYER before taking action.
4. The organization allegedly possesses an elite cadre of 200 to 300 men under SCHNEIDER's direct command which, on a number of occasions, has taken an active part in carrying out the policy of the organization. For example, this group organized a demonstration in 1948 against the Greek Legation in Vienna and has intervened several times to prevent evictions. Members of the cadre are said to be for the most part persons with no definite occupation; they are armed with pistols of various models. In the organizational files, members of the elite cadre are allegedly designated by a small red cross on the upper left of the file card.
5. Since its inception, the organization has been extremely active in carrying on meetings and is owner and publisher of a monthly newspaper edited by Otto DORFER.

Stated Purpose of the Organization

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6. The League of Anti-Fascist Freedom Fighters was created in 1946 by Nationalrat Franz HONNER and was legally constituted by an authorization of the Austrian Ministry of the Interior dated 20 August 1947. According to paragraph II of the organizational statutes, which have been repeatedly altered, the following are the aims of the organization:
- a. Inclusion of all Austrians who have actively combatted Fascism, and in particular the following:
 - i. Former members of the Schutzbund who participated actively in the events of 12 February 1934;
 - ii. Former Austrian volunteers in the International Brigades within the Spanish Republican Army;
 - iii. Members of the Austrian Freedom Battalions (Freiheitsbataillone) within the Yugoslav Army;
 - iv. Austrian partisans and "Freedom Fighters" who carried on the struggle in Austria against German-Fascist domination, together with their regular and active assistants;
 - v. Austrian volunteers who fought in the liberation movements of other countries against the German occupants, together with their regular and active assistants;
 - vi. Austrians who fought as volunteers in the ranks of the Allied Armies against the Nazi regime;
 - vii. Relatives of deceased "Freedom Fighters"
 - b. Cultivation and furtherance of anti-Fascist, democratic ideology in the ranks of its members, aimed at strengthening and propagating democracy.
 - c. Cultivation and furtherance of anti-Fascist, democratic ideology among the Austrian people through lectures, meetings, and publications.

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- d. Collaboration in the complete elimination of Fascist remnants and of Pan-German ideology from the minds of our people, together with their education in Austrian patriotism and cultivation of Austrian national consciousness and Austrian individuality.
- e. Resumption of relations with similar organizations in United Nations countries, with the purpose of promoting friendly relations between Austria and these countries.
- f. Financial support of needy members.*

Personalities
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7. Max Peter SCHNEIDER (also called SHELLEY) is the organization's general secretary. Born in Vienna on 4 December 1921, he is the son of Jewish parents, Abraham and Josefina Schneider. He is an Austrian citizen and married to Ruth Wilma Ascher, born 12 January 1921. In 1939, SCHNEIDER emigrated to England where he worked with the Friends of Austria under Otto BRICHACEK. His parents are said to have been sent to Riga where they died in concentration camp. During the war he fought as an infantryman in the British Army, allegedly in France. In 1946 he is said to have come from France to Prague, where he spent some time. Returning to Vienna, he lived from 17 February 1947 to 29 January 1948 in Vienna VIII, Langeasse 53 as a sub-tenant to one SCHONFELD; since the latter date, he has been living in Vienna II, Rotensterngasse 31/9 but apparently does not pay any rent. The apartment belongs to a certain Capt. Kurt SCHWARZ, said to be working for the British and now residing in Vienna XIII, Neue Weltgasse 1. Capt. SCHWARZ, like SCHNEIDER, attends evening classes at the University of Vienna. SCHNEIDER may be doing some sort of office work for the British Element. His wife, Ruth Wilma SCHNEIDER, works as an employee of the Jewish Community of Vienna (Israelitische Kulturgemeinde.) SCHNEIDER spends every morning in the office of the League of Anti-Fascist Freedom Fighters, presumably without any financial remuneration. He is described as a non-smoker, almost completely a non-drinker, a convinced and incorruptible Communist.

Possible KPOe Use of Organization as Activists

Source B - 15 March 1949

8. KOGL, an official of KPOe district headquarters at Vienna II, when asked by other Party functionaries what steps had been taken to provide armed protection against "Fascist" attempts to break up Communist meetings and demonstrations, said that the League of Anti-Fascist Freedom Fighters would constitute an armed guard. KOGL explained that many members of the League were former members of the Schutzbund who had received quasi-military training. When asked if young Communist activists could join the League, KOGL allegedly replied that they could become non-voting members for a year, after which, if found eligible, they could become regular voting members.

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9. In the opinion of this source, the League of Anti-Fascist Freedom Fighters has now replaced the Werkschutz in importance as a potentially dangerous KPOe para-military formation; there are at present about 400 activists. The new policy of enrolling all persons willing to combat the "forces of Fascism and reaction" represents a considerable departure from the former policy of admitting only those who had actively fought against Fascism in some form. Many hundreds of new members may be acquired in this way.

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* Comment: The regulations for admission of new members, as given here, do not correspond with statements of Source A in para. 2 above. In all probability, if the organization is truly interested in concealing its Communist backing, Source A is wrong in assuming that organizational regulations have been permitted to provide an admission of other categories of "anti-Fascists". It is more likely that the regulations have remained nominally the same, while in actual practice the admission of different elements in actual practice has proceeded apace.